

CURRENT AMERICAN COMMENT

ON CUBA POLICY

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President Kennedy's challenge to Administration Cuba policy critics to propose specific alternatives has evoked a lively reaction.

President A number of editors agree with the President's argument that those dissatisfied with his Cuban performance should do more than merely say "we've got to do something." The Administration having itself "set the example of earnest effort to reduce tensions and to lessen the danger of world conflict," its critics should set out a better course of action, declares the New York Times (similarly, Wash. Post, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Ralph McGill, Walter Lippmann).

The New Republic agrees that Administration critics "have little else to offer" beyond what has been done. While in Washington recently, John S. Knight heard "nothing which would suggest that the critics of Cuban policy have devised wiser, saner and more effective procedures than are presently being followed." However, Harold E. Stassen, who finds Administration Cuba policy "unsatisfactory," urges that Republicans should form a study group to explore the situation and to recommend constructive alternatives.

Generalized Criticism Some critics deny any obligation "to chart the Administration's course." It "has no policy," assert Defended Milburn Akers (in Chicago Sun-Times) and Arthur Krock (of N.Y. Times). Until it has, it is "a proper target for its critics" even if they, too, lack a plan, Krock says. The Wall Street Journal said: "The deeply disquieting thing is the seeming absence of any real plan" by the President. If there has been any decision, the Journal adds, "it is to accept an intolerable coexistence with Soviet conquest in our hemisphere."

The New York Herald Tribune shares James Reston's view that perhaps "the bland exterior of Administration pronouncements" on Cuba "by no means reflects" all of Washington's plans; but it says this does not mean that people can "assume the Sphinx has a secret, merely because it is silent." The President, it asserts, "has not done so well on the Cuban affair that he can expect the unquestioning trust of his countrymen--quite the contrary."

Critics' Proposals

Commentators opposing the Cuba policy show no agreement on any one set course; they offer a variety of remedies. The same is true among the general public, according to a Gallup Poll of May 1 in which the 29% opposed to Administration policy differ about what should be done (49% support current policy, 22% give no opinion).

Economic "Squeeze" Some type of "economic isolation" for Cuba is specified by most critics. The Washington Star advocates a "squeeze" such as the hemisphere applied to the Dominican Republic, which "falls short" of action by invasion or blockade. William S. White opts for enforcing "a true and total quarantine" -- sold to our hemisphere neighbors by persuasion if possible, "but by putting naked and limitless American economic force upon all breakers of the quarantine if we must." The Scripps-Howard papers also advocate "commercial and political isolation" for the island.

Arthur Krock asserts that "economic strangulation is nonsense unless we impose a blockade of Russian shipping" to Cuba. National Review recommends a blockade as "a concrete proposal." But to Administration critic David Lawrence, economic embargo is "hardly an effective" program.

Deal "More Firmly and Positively" With Russia Some suggest "beating our Cuban demands directly and positively" to Moscow. N.Y. Gov. Rockefeller urges that the President demand that the Soviet Union end the training of "saboteurs and subversionists" in Cuba or "we will be forced to take drastic action." The Philadelphia Inquirer recommends demanding of Premier Khrushchev the date of exit for Soviet forces in Cuba--and "if he regards it as an ultimatum, so be it," the Inquirer asserts.

David Lawrence argues that the U.S. "must face up to the need for a diplomatic break with Russia to end the Cuban dilemma." Former Sen. Knowland proposes that hemisphere governments, in conjunction with the OAS, threaten to close all Russian embassies in the hemisphere until Soviet troops leave Cuba. This failing, Knowland advises trying a blockade.

Government-in-Exile There is some support for setting up a government-in-exile for the Cuban people. Life magazine would "figure out what kind of government we want to see replace Castro, foster it and dignify it by recognition." In addition, William Buckley would have Congress authorize liberation sallies against Castro from U.S. territory. Scripps-Howard, however, feels that it would be difficult to achieve agreement among the exiles on a government-in-exile; "and what it would accomplish is problematical, anyhow."

Multiple Actions Other critics have two or more proposals. Scripps-Howard advises a quarantine, steps to end the transit of Communist agents among the Americas, blockading the island and military steps if needed. The Los Angeles Times calls for strict passport controls among the Americas and a quarantine.

Holding that the U.S. should do whatever is needed to force a Soviet withdrawal, Richard Nixon has urged support for the activities of exile raiders, and the use of forceful measures if necessary (similarly, Chicago American). Without commenting on the merits of Nixon's proposals, Roscoe Drummond welcomes the appearance of "some political leadership which will give the nation not just good criticism but clear and concrete alternatives" (also, Wash. Star, Cincinnati Enquirer, N.Y. Herald Trib.).

But Administration critic Washington News (Scripps-Howard) concludes that Nixon "wasn't very specific," noting that he "declined to endorse" either a blockade or an invasion. Yet, he "mirrored the instinctive U.S. opinion that Castro-communism has been tolerated too long," it feels. And William S. White dissents from the idea of using the Cuban exiles, holding that freeing Cuba is "the U.S.'s own responsibility."